

STATEMENT OF NATHAN T. WOLKOMIR, PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, CONCERNING H. R. 6277 INTRODUCED BY CONGRESSMAN HAYS AND REFERRED TO THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: My name is Nathan T. Wolkomir. I am President of the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) which was organized in 1917 and represents employees in every branch of the Federal Service.

In the 88th Congress an attempt was made to remove employees of the Agency for International Development from the regular Civil Service procedures by a program of so-called "selection-out" to be determined by the Administrator for AID. The NFFE cannot help but link this bill with the previous attempt to side-step normal Civil Service procedures in AID.

Section 22 of H. R. 6277 states: "The President is authorized, without regard to the provisions of this or any other law, to provide for the transfer, within three years after the date of enactment of this section, of all personnel (except officers compensated in accordance with the Federal Executive Salary Schedule) in or under the Department, the Agency for International Development, and the United States Information Agency, and such personnel as he may designate of other Government agencies who are engaged in foreign affairs functions, to an appropriate class in the Foreign Service Reserve or Foreign Service Staff. Each officer or employee so transferred shall receive basic compensation at the rate of his class determined to be appropriate by the Secretary, except that the rate of basic compensation received by any officer or employee immediately prior to the

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effective date of transfer shall not be reduced by the provisions of this section" Section 25(a), states the following: "The provisions of the Civil Service Act of January 16, 1883, as amended, section 6 of the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended (5 U. S. C. 652), the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944, as amended, and the Classification Act of 1949, as amended, shall not apply to officers and employees of the Foreign Service of the United States."

These bitter pills cannot be sugar-coated by some benefits being written into the bill.

The NFFE suggests rewriting this bill to include the benefits such as the pay differential, liberalized travel and related expenses and leave provisions included in H. R. 6277 as amendments to the existing regulations within the various agencies involved and omitting the bad features included in Section 22 and Section 25. It is our view that the best interests of government employees are not served by H. R. 6277 as written. Moreover, the NFFE does not think the public interest would be served by this bill as it stands, since it weakens the merit principle so vital to sound administration.

Now that public hearings are being held, the NFFE welcomes the opportunity to appear before this committee to express our views and to answer questions members of the committee might wish to ask concerning our unequivocal opposition to certain provisions of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for receiving our testimony and for the consideration I know you and the other members of the committee will give to NFFE's position on this bill.